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THE MINOTAUR.

THE MINOTAUR,

"Somewhere I've read that the ancients sacrificed their daughters to a monster called the Minotaur. Like them, father, you have sold me to this modern Minotaur." Act III.

A COMEDY DRAMA

In four acts.

— BY —

CHARLES S. ELGUTTER.

CHARACTERS.

JOHN STUBBORN.—Who loves only what belongs to him and is the man of his name.

CHARLES STUBBORN.—His son, a rising young man with ideas of his own as to filial love.

MARQUIS DE MONTMORENCY.—A man of pleasure who consults his own peace of mind, cost what it may.

JULES CRETIN.—The Steward of Maison Blanche, with an eye to his sister's welfare.

MARLIN.—The parish priest with a warm heart and a young head.

PITOU } Two gamekeepers who come to grief.
PATOU }

JACQUES.—Valet to Charles Stubborn.

CLAIRE DE MONTMORENCY.—Daughter of the Marquis, who has American ideas of marriage.

COUNTESS DE POLIGNAC.—Sister of the Marquis, totally opposed to the American ideas of her neice, yet capable of self-sacrifice in the cause of the family honor.

CATHERINE.—Sister of Cretin in search of a husband.

Servants at Maison Blanche and at Montmorency.

INCIDENTS.

ACT I.—The Meeting.
- Scene 1. Library in Maison Blanche
- Scene 2. A disputed path.
- Scene 3. At the brook.

ACT II.—The Resolution.
- Scene 1. Music room in the Chateau Montmorency.

ACT III.—The Refusal.
- Scene 1. A salon at Chateau Montmorency.

ACT IV.—The Reconciliation.
Four months are supposed to have elapsed.
- Scene 1. A room in the Paris mansion of the Marquis de Montmorency.

Time—the present.
Place—Montmorency, and Paris.

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THE MINOTAUR.

ACT I.

Scene 1. The library of Maison Blanche. [Through window a view of the Chateau Montmorency. The sound of carriage wheels is heard, and slamming of carriage door. Cretin speaking without.]

Cretin—Here Paul, the bandboxes and the shawls. [Enter Cretin and Catherine. Servant with boxes and wraps passes into adjoining room.] Welcome to Maison Blanche, sister, all shall be yours.

Catherine—[Looking around.] Delightful, Enchanting! Dear Jules, how much you have done for me!

Cretin—I knew it would please you; a beautiful home isn't it?

Catherine—It seems like a dream; your sudden appearance at Marseilles with the surprising message to come with you to this grand place has quite unnerved me.

Cretin—As I told you, it was part of our agreement. "Get the mortgages and I will marry your sister," said he. It was a large price I asked for this service, but I have well earned my fee and shall be amply repaid in seeing you the wife of John Stubborn.

Catherine—Dear Cretin, dear brother. But where is Mr. Stubborn? Of course you informed him of our coming?

Cretin—Well—ah—that is, not definitely. When I secured the mortgages I telegraphed to Stubborn that Montmorency was his. Then I went post haste for you—but he understands.

Catherine—[Petulently.] He does not know then, I am here?

Cretin—My dear child do not fret on that account. Business men do not like lengthy explanations. Their word is as good as a bond. Besides the mortgages are now in his hands and you are here.

Catherine—Will I please him brother?

Cretin—Tut, tut, of course you will. You see, he is under peculiar obligations to me for past services. And if I do say it myself you are decidedly attractive. Remember, the man you are to marry is well along in years. Why, he has a son who is twenty-four.

Catherine—Your words are reassuring. You will pardon me however if I confess that I can scarcely realize, at one stroke of fortune I am to be transformed into the mistress of Maison Blanche. [goes to window.] How beautful the park!

Cretin—[Joins her.] All this was once the domain of the Montmorencys. That stream yonder, however, is now the dividing line. But the lands will soon be reunited for we hold the mortgages of the Chateau itself.

Catherine—You were not a faithful servant of the Marquis' interests.

Cretin—Oh, fie, sister, you know the Marquis was always a butterfly of light wing, and every beautiful actress was a candle which singed him. For years after the death of his wife he led a gay life in Paris relying on me to pay the piper.

Catherine—And it is quite evident you paid the fiddler as well.

Cretin—I managed his estates prudently enough. But when a pretty face or a well-turned ankle kept plunging him deeper into debt, what was I to do?

Catherine—So I suppose you sold and mortgaged everything.

Cretin—The Marquis had his head completely turned by a famous danseuse—let me see, how long ago was that—I can't just recall it, but it was the winter when Paris went wild over the performances of Mlle Sara of the Gymnase. She led him a pretty caper. I was in distraction to pay for this expensive flirtation when, good luck would have it, John Stubborn came back to his birthplace after forty years. Nobody remembered him. But he came to me and wanted only a modest garden where he could end his days in peace—shrewd fellow—begged me to sell him a strip of sand off in one corner, just enough of a patch to raise a bed of turnips—sharp schemer—and offered me such a tempting sum that I closed the bargain. That was the entering wedge. But one day after I had sold to him, Heaven knows, more than I should, the Marquis appeared with his daughter and sister at the Chateau and told me I had obeyed instructions too literally, and so I changed masters.

Catherine—And this remarkable man it is whom I am to marry.

[Enter Jaques with hatbox, fishing rod etc., etc.]

Jaques—Oh, pardon me, I did not know you had returned sir.

Cretin—Surprised to see me back ,eh. Well Jaques where is Mr. Stubborn?

Jaques—In the garden sir with the Marquis.

Cretin—The Marquis de Montmorency!

Jaques—Excuse me sir, Mr. Charles has just come as well. [Exit.]

Cretin—Charles! I don't understand this.

Catherine—What has happened brother, bad news! Shall I not see Mr. Stubborn to-day? You seem quite excited.

Cretin—Excited, oh not at all, you shall see him in good season. For the present allow me [escorts Catherine and bows her out.] The Marquis here! Charles here! What's in the wind? [Exit]

[Enter John Stubborn and the Marquis.]

Stubborn—[Bows with much ceremony, makes a parade of offering the best chair, but the Marquis declines it and takes another.] At your service Marquis.

Marquis—Let us speak of the business in hand. I have come as you know to request you to renew my mortgages. Ask any interest you wish.

Stubborn—For whom do you take me? For an usurer, I suppose. Heaven forbid. I made my money by working with these two hands. I never lent money at so much a year and I don't propose to begin that business to-day.

Marquis—Well, take a mortgage on my personal property.

Stubborn—As for mortgages of any kind, I hate the sight of them.

Marquis—If you will insist on having your pay you have the power to foreclose on Montmorency.

Stubborn—What, all Montmorency?

Marquis—One moment. Montmorency, as you are aware, is worth more than five hundred thousand francs, the face of your mortgages. Several will share in the sale of the estate.

Stubborn—Marquis, I am a blunt man and say what comes uppermost in my mind. I was a boy here, a gardener lad in the service of your father. He struck me to earth one day, the insult rankled in my breast. I made a vow that I would revenge myself for that blow. I went to Paris, I became rich, I determined to own Montmorency cost what it may. But I do not desire to take Montmorency from you. Surely I have no reasons to wish you well; you have made my life

miserable; you have made me become old before my time; you have brought law-suits against me—

Marquis—For love of Heaven, no more law-suits.

Stubborn—As I was saying, I never had reason to spare you, and yet I feel reluctant to take Montmorency. Why? Because you have a daughter. I saw Mademoiselle Claire de Montmorency only a moment yet she wholly captured my heart. My object is to serve her.

Marquis—Your sentiments do you honor Mr. Stubborn.

Stubborn—Some weeks ago I determined to close in upon you. I sent Cretin to Paris to buy all the mortgages on Montmorency and in order to encourage him to make a clean sweep I promised him that were he successful I would marry his sister. A few days afterwards I spied Mlle de Montmorency on horse-back and I did not have the heart to injure her. Suppose Montmorency falls into my hands, what will happen? Paris has her pleasures and her women; it will not be your fault; if Montmorency is sold your daughter will lie on a bed of straw, and I don't wish her to come to that.

Marquis—[With an effort.] Thank you.

Stubborn—You have a daughter and I have a son. I will not say that he is worthy of her, but he is truly a young fellow of the greatest promise. Let them marry. Put your prejudices aside. There is no longer any question of Marquises but of men, and the utmost you could do for your daughter if she had a dowry of a million—which she hasn't—would be to get for her a fine, intellectual young man like my son. Now my boy doesn't ask for a dowry. On the contrary he will bring one. The day he marrys Claire de Montmorency I will give him a million—think of it, a cool million!

Marquis—You are the soul of generosity, Stubborn.

Stubborn—Don't say another word. These advantages you have not had time to consider. As for that little debt of yours we will say nothing more about it. You will find me the most charming of fathers-in-law. Then, too, think of your daughter; neither dowry nor expectations. What can you do with the poor child? Suppose some Duke or Marquis consents to marry her. I'll bet ten to one he'll be a clown or a fellow living on his wits. You don't know what sacrifices I'm going to make for my boy. He is the apple of my eye, he's my idol.

Marquis—Ah, truly.

Stubborn—What an example we are going to set before our country; and one must do something for one's country. You hear patriots proclaim, "equality before the law." I tell you it is a sham. The world is full of good fellows like myself who hate aristocrats, and aristocrats say to us [kicks with his foot] "get out of our way." Yes, the struggle of the Stubborns and Montmorencys is at the bottom of the social and industrial crisis. One hears the world over the tramp of workmen's shoes going up the palace stairs and the patter of polished boots coming down. Marquis let us reconcile the two. Let us intermarry the old with the new regime and restore the equilibrium.

Marquis—[With forced calmness.] I will be charmed to reconcile the old and new regime. But the fact is, you business men always want bargains. Now, when a man wants to buy Claire de Montmorency and the Chateau as well, it is for the seller to make some of the conditions.

Stubborn—Oh, a question of money with you, eh. With me it is a

question of my son's happiness. Agreed. Will you amuse yourself a moment while I scribble off a contract.

Marquis—A contract!

Stubborn—[Writing and speaking at the table at which he has seated himself.] An agreement by which in case of your backing out of the proposed marriage, you surrender Montmorency at once.

Marquis—Hold, add in consideration, of the mortgages and the the further sum of—say two hundred thousand francs.

Stubborn—[Aside.] Two hundred thousand francs, the avaricious rascal! [Aloud.] Well so be it, what matters a paltry few thousand more or less where one's happiness is at stake. Agreed. Affix your signature here. One moment, there must be witnesses to this transaction.

[Enter Jaques.]

Jaques—Mr. Charles is here.

Stubborn—The very thing, ask him in. [Exit Jaques.]

Stubborn—Now you will see my son, Marquis, and must acknowledge that I have not been misled by a father's partiality.

Marquis—I am sure he is all that I could expect in the husband of my Claire. But Stubborn, are you sure the young people will do as we desire?

Stubborn—What's that? My son cross his father! My son knows no other will but mine [laughs boisterously.] Why Marquis, since the day of his birth I do the thinking and speak for him. I will that she shall please him and by Heaven she shall.

[Enter Charles and Jaques.]

Stubborn—[Running up to his son and embracing him.] My boy, my boy! What have have you been doing to yourself? Brown as a berry! Surely a trip to England could not have tanned you like a gypsy.

Charles—The gentlemen to whom you gave me letters had villas on the Thames and all of them invited me to their homes. Their sons insisted on my rowing and their daughters taught me tennis. So you see father, you are the ultimate cause of action.

Stubborn—Oh hang your law jargon. By the by, I want you and Jaques to witness the signing of an agreement between myself and the Marquis de Montmorency. Marquis, I have the honor to present to you my son Charles.

Marquis—Mr. Charles Stubborn, I have great pleasure in meeting you. You have not been here before, I believe.

Charles—No sir, this is the first time that I was ever in my father's new house.

Marquis—I take pleasure in welcoming you sir to this quiet country retreat and to your father's beautiful home. I hope that in a few days all obnoxious barriers between Maison Blanche and Montmorency will be removed and that we all will be on those friendly terms necessary for ones peace of mind. Let the past be forgotten by you as itwill be by myself.

Charles—It will not be difficult for me to forget what I never knew. I must warn you however that I invariably think my father is in the right.

Stubborn—[Patting him on the back.] Ah, he's got you there Marquis.

Marquis—Yes, so I see. But are the papers ready?

Stubborn—Here they are. Jaques, you are to witness the signing of an agreement between myself and the Marquis de Mont-

morency here present. [Marquis signs the two copies of the agreement. John Stubborn signs. Then Charles signs as witness, while he is signing John Stubborn nudges the Marquis.]

Stubborn—A fine fellow eh, a gentleman to the backbone, sharp as a razor too. Oh you'll be satisfied with him.

Marquis—An amiable young man no doubt, if he is your son Stubborn. [Jaques signs and leaves the room. Charles signs last, drys the copies and hands one of them with a bow to the Marquis.]

Charles—With your permission.

Marquis—Thank you. I hope I shall see you [to Charles.]

Stubborn—[Interrupting.] Certainly Marquis, to-morrow. We'll be at the Chateau on time depend on it.

Marquis—[Aside.] Damn these impudent plebians. How he is pressing this matter; [aloud.] oh, yes certainly;—shall be charmed to meet you. Say at———

Stubborn—Eight.

Marquis—At eight, well so be it. [Consults his watch.] I've an important engagement. Will you excuse me gentlemen? [To Stubborn] I regret I cannot accept your hospitality. Good day. [Salutations are returned and father and son escort Marquis to the door bowing him out.]

Stubborn—[Clapping his son heartily on the back] Oh you lucky young dog! Such a beautiful girl—such eyes—such hair—such a walk, and she rides like Diana. If I were ten years younger I would have her myself. And then so sensible, so spirited, so fearless and so charitable too. Charles, I have shown throughout your life that I loved you, but I never gave such a proof as when I selected Claire de Montmorency for your wife.

Charles—[Absolutely bewildered.] For my wife! Father do you intend me to marry?

Stubborn—Of course I do. How am I to have a grandson if you don't marry? John Stubborn de Montmorency! How well it sounds! —No it doesn't either. I don't like the de. It recalls those despotic nobles. Charles, we will suppress the de. Your son shall be called John Montmorency Stubborn. Yes, it shall be so.

Charles—But father, I haven't seen the lady.

Stubborn—[Good humoredly.] What does that matter, I have seen her and I tell you she has every grace and virtue. Why, my dear boy, do you think in choosing a wife for you I wouldn't get the best article in the market?

Charles—The best article in the market! She consents to accept a husband she has never seen!

Stubborn—The Marquis has seen you.

Charles—If he is satisfied with that, he is a very considerate man.

Stubborn—Is he! A bigger rogue and rascal I never met in the whole course of my life. When you are married we will kick that spendthrift of a father out of doors. To get Claire de Montmorency for you, I have made great sacrifices which as a business man I cannot quite reconcile myself to.

Charles—Give me a little time for reflection. In trying to make me happy you may be making me miserable.

Stubborn—[Angrily.] You are not in love with anybody!

Charles—No, I'm not in love, but I do expect to be allowed to choose a wife myself. From your tenderness as a parent, from your liberal opinion as a man, I———

Stubborn—Ta, ta, ta, ta. Don't talk to your own father who has

made a man of you as if he was a lawyer on the other side of some miserable case. I don't want any of your justice court pleadings, do you hear sir, do you mind that sir? Charles you make me very angry. Why don't you give me your hand as my son should and say, father I will mary Claire de Montmorency whenever you please. "Tenderness as a parent and liberal opinion as a man" [with sarcasm]

Charles—You give me no time for reflection.

Stubborn—I don't want you to reflect. Obey!

Charles—Obey! You are more despotic than those nobles you despise. It is true I am your son and owe you deference———

Stubborn—Oh, you admit that do you?

Charles—But I am also a man, and will not be bullied into obedience. I shall think this matter over. I know your powers of discrimination and the chances are that you have chosen wisely for me. I know your love for me and the chances are that you have chosen someone who will make me happy. I likewise know your disposition and how fearfully you punish disobedience. I know my father, let my father know his son.

Stubborn—[With forced calmness.] Have you done sir?

Charles—You makers of millions have great powers of combination. You play at the game of life as you would at chess. Men and women are the pawns to be moved here and there as you will. Although I am your son, I am after all only a cherished toy in your hands, destined in your plan to reach the last row. But I too may be a chess player and have my combination and my plans.

Stubborn—Phrases, phrases, a schoolboy's tattle. [With an effort.] Mr. Charles Stubborn we dine at four. I will be highly honored—I desire—I shall want—damn me, give me your answer before we break bread together.

Charles—[With hand on door knob.] I understand sir, and I would to heaven you would comprehend me. If you only knew your son to be a man and not a pawn. [Exit]

Stubborn—Stuff and nonsense, a sentimental dreamer; bah. It fairly makes my blood boil. But I'll be calm. To oppose my wishes and have the insolence to stand up before my very face! Oh, but I'll be calm. Why, I'm always right. A doctor of laws, umph, and cannot see what are his best interests. He must marry her. It isn't a small advantage for an ambitious fellow to have a Montmorency in his pocket. These noblemen make excellent alliances. They have royal blood in their veins. Everybody honors them. They have the genius of intrigue. There, look at my lawsuits, the Marquis had only to whisper in the ear of the Judge and he decided instanter that the Marquis' pigs did not eat my cabbages. The world is corrupt and we must get on the winning side. Dares me to my face! But I'll be calm. With the easy victory I won over the Marquis. I'm in too good a humor to fly into a passion. Oh, he'll come 'round, he'll come 'round. If he should defy me I'll not think of that, it chokes me. He shall marry Claire de Montmorency. That is decreed by the stars, because it has been written in my head. But I'll be calm, I'll be calm. [Exit.]

SCENE II.

Scene.—[A disputed path in the woods between the two estates. Pitou with fowling piece followed by Patou with cudgel.]

Patou—Here's where you meet?

Pitou—The wery spot brother. He stops when he seed me and I says to him, "Monsieur Jaques, whose ground be this you walk

on?" Says he, "John Stubborn's, fool." Mark you, he called me fool. Says I, "This be the Marquis' wood, poacher." Mark you, I called him poacher. Then he says to me, "You lie you scurvy dog." Mark you, he called me dog, a scurvy dog.

Patou--Ha! [Swings his cudgel.]

Pitou—Then we came to blows, and we fit and we fit, and we fit. His thumps have left a stonebruise on my pate, brother.

Patou—He called you dog and shaked his fists at you? This be damning evidence.

Pitou—So it be Patou, for doesn't the constable say, trespass is an aggrewating offence, but 'sault and battery be a double wrong in the eye of the law?

Patou—Aye, that't be. Therefore in the name of the law go you before

Pitou—Must I Patou, is't so in law?

Patou—[Nods vigorously.] I heered it so myself.

Pitou—Good. Then, brother stand you by, I'll be rewenged on this strutting Jaques

Patou—Hold, brother, it may be murder to use your gun.

Pitou—Dolt! Be not afeerd. We'll keep within the law. Don't save your blows but cudgel him, cudgel him well. I'll hold him hard. [Presents his gun to his shoulder.]

Patou—You have a wise head on your shoulders, brother.

Pitou—So I have been told. Patou, you be learned in the law!

Patou—[Scratching his head.] Umph.

Pitou—Let me ask you then. This be the Marquis' land, eh?

Patou—It be.

Pitou—Good. Trespass is poachin' eh?

Patou—It be.

Pitou—Good. Then poachin' be stealin'?

Patou —Then were we many times thieves, Pitou.

Pitou—Go, hold your tongue. A thief can be belabored without fear of jail.

Pitou--When the thief can be bagged.

Pitou—That's the law.

Patou—Aye, that be it.

Pitou—Well said. Now comes the conclusion of the law. This Monsieur Jaques, this fine feathered game cock comes upon the Marquis' land unbid. So be he trespasser. From that he goes to poacher, and from poacher he goes to thief [Counts on his fingers.] Therefore, Patou, dear Patou cudgel him well, crack his pate, as he did warm you poor brother's. [Tries to push Patou in the lead who resists.]

Patou—Would you stand safe in the eye of the law? [Pitou nods.] Then go you before. Besides, you be my elder brother, the law agin puts you before. My arm 'll grow strongish if you go before. Ha, [bares his arm] let me at him. There be old scores to pay. Here's for poisoning the Marquis' pigs. [Cudgels the air.]

Pitou—Well said, well done. He durst not 'scape our wengence. By yon brook, see, hard by the bridge we'll lay for him.

Patou—I'll eat him raw, but go you before, brother, I'll stick to your heels. [Exeunt mock heroic.]

SCENE III.

Scene.—[On the banks of a stream running between the two properties. A stone bridge spans the brook, in the center of which is a large iron gate with a huge padlock. Pond lillies growing in the water in great profusion but entirely on the Stubborn side, grassy banks and trees and knolls in the back ground.]

Charles—[Enters in meditative mood.] What a mercenary creature to sell herself.—It is a matter of bargain and sale.—A paragon of beauty—Umph! My father is so immersed in his schemes to connect the Stubborns with this noble house that he thinks too much of Montmorency and not enough of the wife. He is a prejudiced witness. If I could see the lady first, in ten minutes I should be able to make up my mind on the evidence.—My beautiful unknown of Nice, [sighs] pshaw, that's only a dream. He must permit me to see her, if he denies me that, I refuse absolutely to marry this Claire de Montmorency. [Claire is heard singing in the distance, it attracts Charles' attention. He listens for a moment.] Hum, the gardener's daughter; I suppose the belle of the village; a cultivated voice, surely. [Sighs.] But I am in no mood for a flirtation. Adieu pretty singer, lull me to sleep. [Throws himself behind a tree out of sight of Claire.]

Claire—[Enters swinging a large garden hat by the strings. She is upon the farther bank and looks down upon the water lillies.]

Always, always, you will love me,
Tender, true and noble be,
Though a moment I have known you,
Now my heart 's in ecstacy.

Oh, one, two, three of these buds have opened; what a delicious perfume. Oh, oh, oh, how I would like some of them. Why not? The stream belongs to papa just as much as it does to that odious old Stubborn.

Charles—[Aside.] What's that, old Stubborn; papa! Can this be the girl I'm to marry? What is she about to do, I wonder?

Claire—[Seating herself on a stump and removes her shoes and stockings.] Now, Mr. John Stubborn and all your family, if you have any, I give you fair warning that one of your lillies is on the Montmorency side of this stream, not much, it is true, but a little and I intend to remove the intruder. You won't allow any trespassing and we won't allow any trespassing. You shoot our rabbits when they stray among your cabbage beds and I shall pluck all your water lillies that stray beyond the middle of the stream. It is not necessary Mr. John Stubborn to write threatening letters and to summon parish officers. I shall remove the trespassing flower at once with my own hands. Now you have been fairly warned and I shall proceed. [Steps daintily into the stream.] Oh, oh, how cold the water is; what was that I stepped on; there must be snakes in the stream; oh, it's deeper. There goes my hat floating down! What a reckless creature I am! But I must have that lily! [Tries to get one.] Dear me, I can't reach it. What shall I do! If I only had a pole; I'll get the gardener's rake! Hurrah, old Stubborn, I'll beat you yet! [Claire having emerged from the stream picks up her shoes and stockings and exits.]

Charles—[Emerging to view.] A girl of spirit, upon my soul, and beautiful as an houri. What a pretty foot and delicate ankle! What has become of her? There she goes, running like a deer at the top of her speed; why she is already at the turn of the road; at the gardener's lodge; she's gone. Will she come back? Here she is again dragging a monster rake. I'm watching you my water sprite, my fair nymph ; pilferer of water lillies; she comes. [Retires behind the tree.]

Claire—[Having donned her shoes she comes in with a long gardener's rake.] What a run, I'm almost out of breath! Now I shall

see Mr. John Stubborn, if this trespasser can't be removed. [Operates with her rake.] How heavy this rake seems, how awkard I am, I must get hold of the long stock and pull hard. There now I've got him. He doesn't want to come, but come he shall! No resistance to the law. Triumph, he comes! Dear water lily you are mine. [Presses it to her lips.] How beautiful, but I must have another. The large ones all grow on the Stubborn side; everything seems to be going their way [sighs] and against poor papa. Once more I invoke the assistance of the law, dear me this rake is so heavy. [Operates with the rake and hums.]

Charles—[Comes forward holding her hat behind his back.] Ahem, young lady.

Claire—[Looks up, screams, drops her rake, turns to run away.] Oh, there goes my rake, you startled me.

Charles—Pardon me if I did. I had no desire to frighten you, I ony wish to call your attention to the fact that the lily you were appropriating is altogether on the Stubborn side of the stream and cannot be said to have trespassed.

Claire—I deny that. It is plainly on our side.

Charles—On our side, then you are a Montmorency?

Claire—I am.

Charles—And you claim as yours all things on your side?

Claire—Papa has told me that is the law.

Charles—Then this sun bonnet [showing it] which in some mysterious way found itself on the Stubborn side must belong to the Stubborns?

Claire—Oh, that's my hat sir, give it to me.

Charles—Excuse me if I hesitate. Let me see, you have a water lily which, it seems to me, did not grow on your side.

Claire—It was on your side originally perhaps, but as its stock prolonged itself it became possessed of a vagrant humor and wandered away from safety. It trespassed and I seized it. I am sure that is the law, papa has explained it to me time and again.

Charles—According to that logic this hat is forfeited to the Stubborns.

Claire—[Quickly.] By no means, that was an accident. My hat fell into the water when I was———[stops confused, their eyes meet and both laugh.]

Charles—Suppose we compromise. I will return the hat, if you will return the lily.

Claire—Return what you have unconditionally. Why do you want this sweet flower?

Charles—I have a passion for water lillies. Besides it has gained a priceless value in my eyes since it has been plucked by you.

Claire—A pretty compliment I must confess. [Bows with mock politeness.] But, sir, suppose I feel inclined to make the exchange how do I know that you have a right to take it?

Charles—Have no doubt on that point, I am Charles Stubborn.

Claire—What, the son of old Stubborn?

Charles—Yes, I am young Stubborn.

Claire—Is it possible, the Stubborns pay compliments! I thought gallantry was a plant unknown on your grounds.

Charles—It is your benign influence, everything springs into flower where you come!

Claire—[Curtesies.] After such a poetic burst of sentiment I shall have no hesitation in asking for my own.

Charles—[Swinging hat.] The bonnet is too light to throw across, it will fall into the water again.

Claire—And the gate is locked, how annoying. Perhaps you have the key.

Charles—The key?

Claire—I almost doubt that you can be Charles Stubborn. There is the gate on the bridge, doubly locked and padlocked, put there by your father.

Charles—Where is the bridge?

Claire—Have you no eyes?

Charles—Only for the beautiful, Mlle. In my eyes that is a very ugly looking gate and a still more ugly padlock. What a size! It looks as if it belonged to the Bastile. If I can influence my father it shall be removed.

Claire—[Seriously.] My efforts shall not be wanting with mine. Ah, sir, cannot we do something to make two worthy old gentlemen on better terms with each other? Can't we put a stop to those wretched law suits which are as vexatious to the one who wins as to the one who loses? I am my father's confidante, and I can assure you, Mr. Stubborn we are really inclined to live on peaceful terms with your father whose eminence as a promoter of industrial enterprise we fully recognize.

Charles—Thank you in behalf of my father. I have permission have I not, to clear this abominable gate? [Jumps over the gate.] Permit me to restore some of your property that became possessed of vagrant humor. [They laugh.]

Claire—[Hangs her head in confusion.] The sun affects my eyes.

Charles—Now that I see you plainly, you remind me of a young lady I once met at Nice, and who left an impression on my mind which haunts me like a dream; a dream more to me than the most dazzling reality.

Claire—[Timidly.] I recognized you some moments ago. You are the gentleman who assisted me to remount when my horse stumbled.

Charles—Can it be you indeed! How extraordinary, these meetings and partings which chance arranges! That was not the first time I saw you. One day I was walking in the woods and had reached a shaded avenue. I stopped to admire an old oak whose trunk and branches were matted with ivy, when I heard the beating of horses' hoofs. I turned to see a young lady in black riding habit. I stood rooted to the spot following her with my eyes. That was the first time I saw you.

Claire—I remember to have remarked that tree.

Charles—I came to that place at the same hour day after day in the hope of again seeing the fair unknown. At last that hope was realized. Like a meteor you flashed by in a mad gallop, your eyes sparkling with pleasure, your whole frame quivering with excitement. Just as you passed that tree your horse stumbled.

Claire—And you kindly caught my Bess and helped me into the saddle.

Charles—Then with a smile you were off and I saw you no more until to-day. But I kept a memento of the occasion for your Marabout feather dropped from your hat and I have preserved it among my dearest possessions.

Claire—Dear me, I must contest your right to that for the law of trespass surely cannot apply in this case.

Charles—No, but the law of treasure trove bears directly upon it. Have I your permission to bring it to Montmorency?

[Enter Servant.]

Servant—[Interrupting, touches his hat to Claire.] Mademoiselle, Madame de Polignac requests you to walk with her on the terrace.

Claire—Tell her I will be there immediately. [Exit servant.]

Charles—May I offer my arm?

Claire—No, no, no, no, my aunt the Countess would be dreadfully shocked. I do not know what she would say if she knew about this afternoon's proceedings.

Charles—Do you mean about———

Claire—I do not know you well enough to discuss this subject, but I must tell you Mr. Stubborn for fear that you may conceive erroneous impressions of me, that I believe it to be no wrong for a young girl to exchange a few words with a young man, even when her parents are not present and when no duenna is near by to play propriety. I understand that in America young women are benefitted by an absence of the restraints which surround us in France—oh, here comes my Aunt!

[Enter Polignac.]

Polignac—[Severely.] Claire, can I believe my eyes? Are you actually conversing with a young man? [Claire and Charles embarrassed.] What is the meaning of this silence? I demand an answer. Who is this young man to whom you were talking so earnestly when I turned the corner?

Claire—Really aunt, he is a perfect stranger.

Polignac—A perfect stranger! France, France, what are we coming to! I find my niece, a Montmorency, in conversation with a man and when I ask his name, she tells me he is a perfect stranger to her. Perhaps sir, you will be good enough to explain who you are. What is your name?

Charles—My name is Charles——— [stops short as Claire makes signs of negation.]

Polignac—Charles, Charles what? Claire, I am suffering from neuralgia and I do not hear distinctly. What did he say his name was, Charles———?

Claire—I didn't hear it distinctly myself, but it sounded English.

Polignac—You are from England, young man?

Charles—I landed in France only three days ago, Madame.

Polignac—But you have French connections, you came to visit some one?

Charles—I am on a visit to Mr. Stubborn.

Polignac—[Indignant.] Stubborn! [She quickly draws Claire aside and talks to her, then turns to Charles.] Mr. Englishman whose name I did not catch, I understand this matter tolerably well. You do not know the state of things here. We are at war with the proprietor of Maison Blanche, who is the most———

Charles—Stop Madame, do not I beg you speak ill of the gentleman whose guest I have the honor to be.

Claire—[Comes forward.] It is right of him aunt to defend Mr. Stubborn, and we must say nothing disrespectful in his presence.

Polignac—Claire, it is highly improper for you to come forward when I requested you to step aside and not associate with this person.

Claire—[Angrily.] I am not associated with this gentleman. Am I to be schooled and scolded simply because my hat blew off and fell into the water and was rescued? [To Charles.] I hope that I have

said nothing in your hearing [with emphasis] which could have offended you and if I have, accept———

Charles—Not another word, Mlle., on my honor I heard nothing you could wish I had not heard and [with emphasis] I saw nothing you could wish I had not seen. [Both Claire and Charles embarrased, Polignac looks suspiciously from one to another.]

Polignac—Claire, your conduct is simply barbarous. There is something in all this I do not understand. However, Mr. Englishman, one thing is clear, you are an intruder upon these premises. Should you meet this young lady again do not speak to her under any circumstance.

Claire—Aunt, I will not suffer this insult. Sir, when you meet me again, you will undertand that I give you the right to speak to me if it be your pleasure.

Polignac—Claire, this is too much. This is actually an invitation to develop a chance meeting into a positive acquaintance. I forbid it, sir. Never speak to this lady whenever or wherever you meet her. You smile sir. I amuse you sir. But we shall see. I shall acquaint my brother, the Marquis of your extraordinary behavior and he will demand an explanation sir, of your conduct, sir. [Exit with Claire.]

Charles—Adieu Mlle, adieu Madame.

Claire—[Turns in spite of her aunt.] Au revoir, sir. [Exit.]

Charles—Oh the darling girl, as full of life as she is innocent, as innocent as she is charming. My father had his proverbial luck when he thought of her, and my dream of Nice becomes an actuality. Claire, it is a pretty name, and like my own begins with C. I will cut a monogram of two interlaced C's on some tree. There is a birch that looks as if it wished to be the recipent of just such confidence. [Exit.]

[Enter Cretin and Catherine.]

Cretin—Think twice before you act. It is true I encouraged you.

Catherine—You fetched me here to become the wife of John Stubborn and you shall not thwart me.

Cretin—But my dear Catherine, you do not know this Stubborn. When I went to him a half hour ago and reminded him of his pledge he flew into a passion and swore he would kick us both out of the the house. Thwart him? The height of rashness. We must humor him. That's the way I advanced as steward and confidential agent in his service.

Catherine—I am sick at heart of your bungling. All along I half suspected you were building fond hopes out of nothing. I will not be jilted and be made a laughing stock by your stupidity. He shall tell me whether he will marry me.

Cretin—Caution, my dear sister, you are so unduly excited. Patience and caution, trust my old head.

Catherine—Patience, patience, oh, to be treated in this shameful manner! [Exeunt Cretin and Catherine expostulating. Enter Charles and John Stubborn on opposite sides of the brook, Charles with his back to his father and face towards Montmorency.]

Stubborn—[After watching him a moment.] What are you doing over there? Are you so impatient to set foot on Montmorency that you cannot wait until the gate is down?

Charles—Why, oh, I beg your pardon father, I fear I have laid myself open to a charge of trespass.

[Enter Pitou and Patou.]

Patou—Hello, what cock sparrow 's this?

Pitou—You are not the chap we're huntin' for, but trespassin' is

just what you've done young man. Just come along with us. and give us no trouble, we'll hand you over perlitely to the constable.

Patou—We seed you a cuttin' the young trees, didn't we brother, ketched right in the act doin't. So come along young feller or else we may hurt you. [Twirls cudgel.]

Stubborn—Hold on my men, there's some mistake. The gentleman is my son.

Pitou—He is eh, well all the better, we'd like to get our hands on you too, old hedgehog.

Charles—[Who has been quietly standing by, rushes at Pitou and knocks him down.] Rascal, you dare insult my father! Take that, and that. As for you, you impudent vagabond [turns on Patou who comes to his brother's aid flourishing his cudgel. Charles catches one end of it. They wrestle up and down. Finally Charles closes in upon him and pitches him into the brook.]

Stubborn—[During the contest dances up and down excitedly.] Hold on there, it's my son. Let him go, let him go I say. Ass, brigand, let go. I'm coming to your help Charles! [Rushes on the bridge.] Where is the key to the gate? I can't find it anywhere! [Fumbles in his pockets.] Damn the key and the one who put the gate here. [Tries to climb over the gate.] Hold on Charles, oh, I can't ever get over. Bravo Charles, in he goes. The Stubborns always come out on top.

Charles—[To Pitou who holding his nose advances cautiously on Charles] Come on if you want any more. [Puts himself into scientific attitude.]

Pitou—I don't want any more to do with you. You are a perfessional and I'll have the law agin' you and the other one there. He was a aidin' and abettin' you, so he was.

Stubborn—Hey, what, I'll have 'em both in jail before sundown.

Charles—Pick your comrade out of the stream and be off. Here's salve for your damaged face. [Throws coins on the grass, Pitou picks them up sullenly and helps Patou who has been floundering about in the water. Charles vaults the gate and reappears on the Stubborn side.]

Stubborn—[Embracing him.] My brave boy, my dear Charles you are a Hector, I'm proud of ye; but come, dinner is waiting. Never mind your decision Charles, let's have dinner first and you can have time Charles, more time if you wish, for you are a man and not a pawn.

Charles—But I don't want more time, I'll marry the young lady whenever you please.

Stubborn—[Overjoyed.] No—what—Charles, do you mean it? Really? Why this is the happiest day of my life.

[Curtain.]

ACT II.

Scene—[Music room in Chateau de Montmorency. Time, after dinner of the same day, wax candles burning in the candelabras. A log is burning on the hearth.]

Catherine—Madame will you prevent this marriage?

Polignac—The news you bring quite overcomes me. The articles of marriage you say, have been drawn this very day? I see it all, the Englishman I met was the son.

Catherine—My brother concluded the arrangements with the Marquis, not an hour ago.

Polignac—Oh, this is infamous? Where was your family pride, your honor. Henri, to sacrifice your daughter in this way?

Catherine—He promised to marry me but now—— [Weeps.]

Polignac—Who was to marry you, the son?

Catherine—No, the father.

Polignac—Then Stubborn has marriage on the brain!

Catherine—I came especially to Maison Blanche to marry him. But this grand alliance with your niece has robbed me of him.

Polignac—Oh, Henri, Henri, not a word of this to me! If I know my niece she will not stoop so low as to espouse this gardener's son, but the mortgages, we shall lose Montmorency.

Catherine—Alas, alas, I fear he is lost to me.

Polignac—[Aside.] A grand alliance. What difference to them whether the father or the son marries? Claire must not marry the son. I will offer myself as the sacrifice for Henri's sins, and preserve the name of Montmorency from the disgrace of a misalliance. [To Catherine.] You say that the Stubborns will be here to-morrow, believe me, they shall not have my niece.

Catherine—Heaven bless you Madame.

Polignac—I see the Marquis coming. Await me in my apartments to-morrow.

Catherine—You have made me so happy. [Presses the hand of the Countess to her lips, exit.]

Polignac—You repose no confidence in your sister, Henri, she will show her devotion to your daughter nevertheless.

[Enter Marquis, Marlin, Claire resting on her father's arm. All in good spirits and laughing.]

Claire—A capital story, papa. [To Marlin.] Poor fellow, jilted when he thought he was most favored [they laugh.]

Marlin—When I was a student at the university, as I remember it now, a bright young creature treated my chum almost as shockingly. [To Polignac.] Madame, I am charmed to see you looking so well. I have with me Friar Anglico's "Saints' Redemption," which you requested.

Polignac—Thank you, Abbe, how thoughtful of you, there are passages in the sainted work I would have you read to me, especially the exhortation to wayward sinners. [looks hard at the Marquis.] You know, Abbe, this is the evening set aside for discussing means of relieving the worthy poor of the parish.

Marlin—True, true, it had almost slipped my memory. You are kind to remind me, [rapidly turns leaves of book] ah, here it is, chapter four—no, chapter five, [runs his finger down the pages] to which I wish to call your attention, Madame.

Marquis—By the by, who was that charming creature I caught a glimpse of just now?

Polignac—That, Henri, is a most estimable young woman of the neighborhood, does she please your fancy?

Marquis—I assure you I have no interest in her. [Sinks into arm chair beside the fire and smokes.]

Marlin—Oh, here it is at last Madame, beginning with the fourth line from the top of page three hundred, [reads] "true repentance consists in absolving one's self"—

Polignac—[Aside.] Impious man, he is not going to inform me of his dastardly crime. [Aloud.] Come, Abbe, you shall sit here where the light is stronger. [Polignac and Marlin seat themselves at table at one side.] It will soothe my nerves to hear the blessed words.

Claire—[Who has seated herself at the piano hums and plays dreamily]

Always, always, you will love me,
Tender, true and noble be.
Though a moment I have known you,
Now my heart's in ecstacy.

Marquis—Claire, my child, do not strum so. Come and join me. [Claire leaves piano and stands in front of the fireplace meditatively tapping her foot on the fender. Marquis rouses himself from his reverie tossing his cigarette into the fire.] Why Claire, what a coquettish slipper, what a lovely silk, and what a pretty foot.

Claire—[Dreamily.] Do you think so, papa?

Marquis—My dear, I never saw one so small nor one so perfect in form.

Claire—[Rousing herself.] And yet if all tales be true, my papa has great experience in such matters.

Marquis—All tales are not true, and my experience has been much less than the kind world gives me credit for.

Claire—Now, truthfully, will this foot compare with a ballet girl's, for instance?

Marquis—Comparisons are proverbially odious. My child, your foot is perfection.

Claire—[Playfully.] I know someone who could give an opinion on this important subject, someone who saw it very plainly indeed.

Marquis—Happy man, who was he?

Claire—Someone who saw it uncovered, and to-day, moreover.

Marquis—Why who could have been the happy mortal? Uncovered you say?

Claire—[Raising her voice perceptibly.] Bare, papa.

Polignac—[Who has been dividing her attention between Marlin and Claire.] Claire did you actually say, bare? You must be more conventional in your language, you really must, or I don't know what people will think of you. [Aside.] What can he be saying to her?

Marlin—It is indeed, a word not commonly used in polite society.

Marquis—She was asking me, Mathilde, if Spanish ladies rode bareback.

Polignac—[Aside.] Is he speaking the truth? [Aloud.] Never use such an expression, Claire, it smells of circus equestrianism. Say unsaddled, or without saddle. These things are more important than one can realize. [Marlin nods assent.]

Marquis—You have not told me yet who it was that saw my darling's foot unsaddled.

Claire—Guess. But you couldn't if I gave you a hundred chances. Just fancy, it was no less a person than the son of the ogre of Maison Blanche. I was appropriating water lillies—

Marquis—[Rousing himself.] Ah, so, what did he say?

Claire—He came upon me while I was operating with a rake, having rescued my hat which fell into the water.

Marquis—That was very gentlemanly.

Claire—Oh he behaved charmingly. No Marquis could have been more gallant.

Marquis—[Aside.] Peste, things are looking favorable for our little arrangement. [Aloud.] He was deferential, was he.

Claire—Very, and at the same time he talked nonsense charmingly.

Marquis—And did my sensible American girl talk nonsense too?

Claire—I believe I did. But I talked sense as well. I said I hoped that he would join me in endeavoring to make our respective parents on more friendly terms.

Marquis—Did you say that? Now, the fact is I made overtures this very day to Mr. Stubborn, and he met them in a most friendly spirit. I saw your Phœnix too, but only for a moment, and by the way, they are coming here in a day or two.

Claire—[Thoughtfully] Are they? This is news indeed. But you mustn't call him my Phœnix, for you saw him apparently before I did. Pray, why do you call him my Phœnix?

Marquis—Well, I don't know really why I give him that title; but the truth is, he is a very remarkable young man. His father has given him great advantages and he has made the best of them. He was brought up in English schools and has since studied law with great success. I haven't the least doubt, a brilliant career is before him. The law, you know, is now the high road to fame.

Claire—Dear me, papa, you talk as if you thought he would become chief justice or president of France some day.

Marquis—I haven't the slightest doubt of that, my dear. All the special pleaders speak well of him because he is more than talented and eloquent. He is imbued with lofty thoughts and is influenced by high motives. He has a sense of justice which few great men possess nowadays.

Claire—Why, really, I saw nothing special about him, and what you say is quite surprising.

Marquis—He struck me as a remarkable young man. The father with his millions has picked up a veneer of polish, but his native coarseness is eternally cropping out. But the son is truly a gentleman. The fact is, that auburn-haired fellow with his little English ways has a heart of gold and a brilliant future. Perhaps if you conversed seriously with young Charles Stubborn you will find him a marked exception to the young men of to-day.

Claire—[Looking fixedly at her father.] In walking in the path bordered with sweet briar I have stepped on nettles.

Marquis—[Uneasily.] What are you murmuring, Claire?

Claire—You praise this young man as if you proposed him for a suitor.

Marquis—Why, that is an idea, to be sure; a little strange, isn't it, but take it for what it is worth. Have you any prejudices? I haven't any. A great philosopher with whom I enjoy agreeable controversies told me the other day, "One hears the tramp of wooden shoes going up the palace stairs and the patter of polished boots coming down." Nothing is truer. Those people are going up in the world and we are coming down. Old France has not the vigor to survive; her nobility must intermarry with the new France. If we are on our guard, my dear, we can ward off the disaster.

Claire—Is it part of your scheme that I shall marry your Phœnix?

I insist, sir, upon being told the whole of this. What are your intentions? what do you propose to do with me?

Marquis—My darling girl, do not grow so angry. Certainly a little offhand pleasantry should not be taken seriously. Now speaking of this Phœnix——

Polignac—What are you two people quarreling about? I can see that Claire is talking much too loud for a well-bred gentlewoman. But how am I to have much effect upon you, Claire, if your father instead of assuming the authority of a parent takes the gentle, coaxing vein of an elder brother.

Marquis—There, there, Mathilde, you are altogether too severe. Your interruptions I can see by the face of Abbe Marlin are not at all appreciated, for he is reading a very interesting sermon for your benefit.

Marlin—Oh, Marquis, I could wish for no more attentive auditor than your worthy sister.

Polignac—Brother, your remark is wholly gratuitous and a reflection upon me.

Marlin—No, no, Madame, I assure you—only a bon mot of the Marquis, ha, ha. [Polignac resumes the reading and conversation in dumb show.]

Claire—Once for all, are you serious, or are you joking?

Marquis—Eh, certainly I'm joking. However, one ought to be brave enough to express his convictions. My honest opinion is that this fine fellow is an admirable catch for any woman.

Claire—For a Montmorency?

Marquis—Assuredly.

Claire—You don't say a word about misalliance.

Marquis—There isn't any. The millions of old Stubborn bury that. I know he intends on the marriage of his son to give him several.

Claire—I am sufficiently prejudiced to believe that the millions of John Stubborn are not necessary for my happiness.

Marquis—Bah, that is good enough to say. The happiness of women is so complex and so expensive. Now, suppose, I were in earnest—just suppose, of course—and desired you to marry him; now what would be your answer?

Claire—That a Montmorency was not born to marry a Stubborn.

Polignac—[Comes forward with Marlin.] I am sure she mentioned the name of Stubborn. Henri, you have forgotten to teach her that there are expressions one should not use under any circumstance.

Marlin—Stubborn, John Stubborn, a man who never appears at mass. A strange character, I don't know what to make of him, and yet charitable. Only yesterday he sent me one hundred francs for the poor of the parish. For all that, he is not the man to my liking, boorish and egotistical.

Claire—I told my father that John Stubborn is an abominable man and that his son is no better.

Polignac—A son; has he a son? [To Marlin] If that man has a son, what are we coming to? To think that those wretches possess to-day the fields which belong to Montmorency. Where are they going to stop? They aspire, no doubt, to reside in the Chateau de Montmorency, to eat from the plate of the Montmorency. [Aside] Will he not yet confess to me?

Marquis—[Aside.] Heaven be praised, she is still in the dark.

Marlin—Their ambition it would seem knows no bounds. But,

Madame, you desired to consult the parish register, did you not? Some twenty deserving poor have already applied.

Polignac—Oh, thank you, Abbe. [They look over the parish register.]

Claire—The Stubborns evidently have had the effrontery to make this proposition to you? Did you have the weakness to accept it?

Marquis—Yes, but conditionally.

Claire—Infamous!

Marquis—It was all your fault. That rascal saw you one day and you made an indelible impression on him. He lost his head and dreamt about you and finished the business by confessing to me that he was dying to marry you. I told him no—a very emphatic no. "Ah, well," said he, "if she will not be my wife she will at least be my daughter-in-law." [Chuckles.]

Claire—Don't laugh. I am not in a mood to appreciate your peculiar vein of humor. I am sure this man has some claim on you.

Marquis—Must I confess—the rights of a creditor over a debtor.

Claire—Is there a law which gives a creditor the authority to lay hands on the daughter of his debtor? Is there another law which legalizes a debtor to deliver his daughter without her consent? Somewhere I've read that the ancients sacrificed their daughters to a monster called the Minotaur. Like them, father, you have sold me to this modern Minotaur. [She dashes to pieces a vase which she holds in her hand.]

Polignac—Mercy, what's the matter? [Polignac and Marlin come forward.]

Marquis—Nothing at all. It's the weather; she's nervous.

Polignac—Nervous? why, she's not yet twenty. I feel somehow her action is connected with those odious Stubborns. If your father has in any way espoused the cause of these miscreants, you are right, my child, in resenting it. I understand something of this matter.

Marquis—[Aside] Does she suspect? [Aloud.] My dear Mathilde, how can you say anything like that?

Polignac—[Aside.] Oh, the weakness and cowardice of men. [Aloud.] Henri, you do not know what sacrifices I am about to make for your sake. Claire, my brave child [kisses her, which is silently returned], you are indeed a Montmorency. Come, Abbe, let us pay a visit to the old butler.

Marlin—Good night, daughter, you shall tell me all your troubles to-morrow. I fear she is not well [to Marquis]. You need the air of Nice, my child. Good night. [Marquis escorts Polignac and Marlin to the door. He then returns to Claire.]

Marquis—Calm yourself, my own sweet Claire; calm yourself.

Claire—[Recovering herself, but with a sob in her voice.] I am calm now, papa, but tell me everything. I am sure that of yourself you would plot nothing against me. But do not assist others in their conspiracy. Tell me all. Do not be afraid. It was not the danger it was the surprise and the pain of finding you against me that unnerved me. But, papa, are we ruined? [He nods assent.] Well, what do I care for that. Men are so afraid to tell women of their misfortunes. The world will blame you, papa, but your daughter will never. With all your faults, you have been a loving father to me and have made me womanly.

Marquis—The hope of settling you advantageously in life weighed more with me than you can believe.

Claire—I am sure you were planning for my happiness.

Marquis—Well, so I consented; that is all.

Claire—No, no, there is more to this or you would not be so agitated.

Marquis—My consent was subject to your approval; oh, I made that a condition.

Claire—Then the matter is only a proposal. There is no agreement, is there?

Marquis—Well, Stubborn did scratch off some sort of a contract, which I signed, but I cannot say that I read it, at least not carefully. He had so badgered me that I was in a sort of a daze and would have done anything he told me provided I could have escaped with my life.

Claire—Poor papa, dear papa, let me see the agreement.

Marquis—[Gasping.] Would, would that be right, Claire? wouldn't it be a breach of confidence?

Claire—Not at all. And even if it were, who is the more entitled to your confidence, that old ogre of Maison Blanche or your own daughter who loves you [both arms around his neck]. I must see the agreement. Papa, dear, let me see the agreement.

Marquis—There, there, you shall see it. [Takes out his pocket book, fumbles in the papers, adjusts his eye glass, examines one or two.] Look at that, my child. I believe that is the contract, isn't it? [She nods.] I feel fatigued. [He sits down in his old seat by the fireplace. [Claire reads the paper.]

Claire—[With an exclamation of surprise and pain.] Why, it's signed by him; it's signed by him! [The paper falls from her fingers.]

Marquis—Of course, my dear, Stubborn and I both signed it.

Claire—I mean Charles Stubborn.

Marquis—Only as a witness.

Claire—But he knows all about this agreement?

Marquis—Who can tell? He may be as deep in the scheme as his villainous father.

Claire—[Hoarsely.] Do you think so?

Marquis—The Stubborns do not appreciate your delicate views, I assure you. Since you refuse this proposition I am resolved to be guided by you entirely. I have educated you to think for yourself, my American girl, and as your happiness is at stake—well, we must sell Montmorency. [Sighs.]

Claire—Sell Montmorency, my dear Montmorency; that will be our shame, that will be our disgrace.

Marquis—Ah, my dear, we must choose. If these old walls are indispensible to your happiness, resign yourself to become the wife of this young man.

Claire—Never.

Marquis—I also say, never. We shall sell Montmorency. I shall not have a care in the world. You will have a comfortable home with your uncle. As for me, I don't mind what becomes of me—don't be alarmed that I will put a bullet through my heart—I am going to hire out to some American showman who will display to his countrymen the face, the back, and in profile, the last of the Montmorency.

Claire—Stop, you pain me. [Goes to table and takes candle, preparatory to retiring.]

Marquis—Claire, my darling, are you despondent? Come, you have not kissed me good night. After all, it is my fault that we are beggars, but how can I regain your good will—how can we escape

from the clutches of these robbers? Ah, an inspiration—it will give us a respite at least and may prove our deliverance. Listen, according to the terms of the agreement with John Stubborn, if the marriage is broken through some cause for which we are not responsible—as if, for instance, his son should reject you—I have four years in which to discharge my mortgage obligation. In four years I can find means to pay it Not to marry that exceptionally fine young man—not to sell Montmorency will be happiness indeed! If you can disgust this Nestor of a lawyer, this remarkable Phœnix, this mirror of chivalry—if you can bring it about that he shall refuse you—I know it is so hard, you are so pretty, but can't you invent some way? You are one of Eve's daughters; if you are not artful, what's the use of being a woman? [Claire sighs.] Cheer up, my darling. Light is breaking in on our misery. You can dispel the clouds entirely. Where are your resolutions to meet this situation bravely? I feel as if a great load has been lifted off my shoulders. Yes, you shall do it, you shall make him refuse you and break this odious bond. Capital idea. Here are two kisses for the inspiration. Good night, my darling, good night. Remember, it all rests with you to save our honor and our estates. [Exit.]

Claire—[Who has sunk into an armchair, finally arouses herself from her stupor, her eyes wander slowly about the room until they fall upon the marriage contract on the floor. She picks it up, reads the document again, and then with an effort repeats the name of Charles Stubborn; she falls back sobbing into the chair.] Charles Stubborn!

[Curtain.]

ACT III.

Scene—[Evening. A grand salon in Chateau de Montmorency, brilliantly illuminated. Doors leading to conservatory, library and picture gallery. A window overlooks garden. Marquis is speaking to Charles in dumb show. John Stubborn eagerly looking out of window to garden. He interrupts them.]

Stubborn—Once upon a time a pear tree grew in that garden. I can almost see it now and a fine tree it was too. I was then a stripling of sixteen. Very proud to be in the service of the Marquis de Montmorency. I do not wish to speak ill of your father, but he had a hobby. He thought he understood horticulture, but he didn't know the first principles. He insisted that the shears were better than the pruning knife. It is false, absolutely false. Any fool could have told him better. Well, I was busy one day trimming that pear tree. Your father came to where I was working and watched me for a moment. Then he called me an ass and swore that I was destroying his pear tree. Now why should I want to destroy it? I never had a spite against the tree. He became angry and then, and then—are you listening? he was here, I was there—then raising his foot he sent me flying head first against that tree. [Laughs.] What would your father think when he administered his correction, that forty years afterwards my son would marry his granddaughter.

Marquis—If he had foreseen that a kick would one day have such happy consequences for his family, I am sure he would have doubled the dose.—I have some business to transact with your father who understands so thoroughly the pruning of fruit trees. My daughter is somewhere in the conservatory; she will be charmed to meet you.

Charles—An infinite pleasure, I assure you. [Exit.]

Stubborn—Eh, aren't you going to introduce them? where is your daughter?

Marquis—It is unnecessary; yesterday the young people became acquainted without our aid.

Stubborn—You don't say so—the sly dog—not a word to me—the young rascal. But, Marquis, that kick was the making of me. That very night I set out for Paris. I swore that some day Montmorency should be mine. [Laughs boisterously.]

Marquis—[Taking his arm.] Come, what do you say to a peaceful cigar in the garden?

Stubborn—The very thing. [About to go when Polignac meets them.]

Polignac—Mr. John Stubborn, I presume. A man so eminently prominent for financial ability that I esteem it a pleasure to form your personal acquaintance, sir.

Marquis—[Astonished.] Allow me to introduce you, Mr. Stubborn, Countess de Polignac.

Stubborn—Madame, the pleasure of meeting you fully repays my visit to Montmorency. Your name is not altogether unfamiliar.

Polignac—I looked forward to meet ng you, sir, with the greatest delight. There, I said to myself, our estimable neighbor will at last honor us with his presence. [Makes sign to Marquis to leave them.]

Marquis—[Tugs at her dress.] For the life of me what are you up to?

Stubborn—[Aside.] Charming woman; these people of rank are decidedly wellbred, and she 's a Countess.

Polignac—I am sure the Marquis can spare you a half hour, can't you Henri? [Takes arm of Stubborn and goes out, laughing to Marquis.]

Marquis—[Amazed.] To think that of her, of all women under the sun, she who prides herself on family and deportment. To entertain that dog, my enemy. [Moves after them as far as the door.] Can I believe my eyes, she hangs on his arm, she whispers in his ear —what damnable jugglery is this! [Turns around and sees Catherine who has just entered.]

Catherine—Oh, sir, is he here? Bring me to him. Where can I find him, I must speak to him.

Marquis—What you too; are these women mad! Come, I'll have this riddle solved. [Grasps Catherine by the arm and rushes out after Stubborn and Polignac.]

[Enter Stubborn and Polignac from the gallery.]

Polignac—Since you love flowers, let me place in your buttonhole one of these orchids.

Stubborn—Thank you, Madame, I shall esteem this little blossom as a pledge of your approval of the match between my boy and your niece.

Polignac—[Coldly.] Claire is too young to entertain matrimony and your son does not appear much older.

Stubborn—Why Madame, my son Charles is twenty-four.

Polignac—But you yourself are still in your prime and may marry again. I wonder you have not thought of that Mr. Stubborn.

Stubborn—No Madame. Once is enough I assure you.

Polignac—But in the evening of life when the faculties decay what can be more agreeable [looking at him with great tenderness] than the assiduous attention, and fond attachment of an affectionate wife?

Stubborn—It sounds well Madame, but you can get more downright attention from a nurse who knows her business than from the tenderest wife. I don't believe in love and tenderness, you see.

Polignac—Is that the way the practical men of business weigh in the balance the most sacred bonds of the affection? Must they value everything in a commercial sense? Nevertheless there is something to admire in such rugged, manly characters as yours, that one cannot but respect the ring of the true metal. Do you know, sir, that I am surfeited with the empty honors of nobility. If I only had for a husband a man for instance, whose titles were won by his own exertion like yours. I should consider myself the happiest mortal in existence. [Sighs.] I hope I am conducting myself with propriety. [Aside.]

Stubborn—[Aside.] Well I'm blessed if she isn't making love and a Countess in the bargain. You do me too much honor Madame—

Polignac—You hesitate sir?

Stubborn—Madame, my ambition is to connect my name with your family and that hope is about to be realized by the marriage of my son to your neice.

Polignac---But if she should refuse.

Stubborn---Refuse!

Polignac---No, no, I don't mean that, still you know that young girls are so headstrong. They do not often see what is to their best interests. Claire is especially self-willed. Should she oppose this match, nothing can move her. If, however, an alliance with our house could be consummated through other channels, in a short time her objections to your son might be overcome. But at present I fear, Mr. Charles will receive scant encouragement.

Stubborn---Don't say that. It can't be so. I have set my heart on this marriage and if I move Heaven and earth it shall take place.

Polignac---Your vehemence frightens me. [Aside.] Should my plan miscarry. [Exeunt!]

[Enter Marquis and Catherine.]

Marquis --Hum, so he promised to marry you, the rascal, and deceives you, and Madame de Polignac is pleading your cause, well she has taken a strange way of doing you that service. Poor child, I pity you from the bottom of my heart. But why must it be the old Stubborn. If I were a real pretty woman like yourself I would fancy the son.

Catherine—Sir?

Marquis—Oh, of course, of course, I merely suggest, you know, that if you have any claim on the son I would be of great assistance to you.

Catherine—Why should I not marry John Stubborn?

Marquis—You may as well count on the stars falling to earth as becoming his wife in the event of a marriage into my family. Can't you see he has used Cretin for a tool and is playing you false. Come now, aid me in preventing his designs on my happiness. Denounce Charles Stubborn openly as your husband—as your lover.

Catherine—That would be madness. I never saw him before to-day.

Marquis—What does that matter? Since Stubborn has tricked you so shamefully, why not crush the dearest wish of his heart? That would be sweet revenge.

Catherine—Don't tempt me, I will not listen. I can prove nothing against Charles. Why should I ruin myself and my brother to gratify you?

Marquis—I will pay you handsomely.

Catherine—No, no, I won't listen.

Marquis—Ten thousand francs.

Catherine—No, no, don't tempt me.

Marquis—Twenty thousand.

Catherine—No, I tell you no!

Marquis—Fool, see, Polignac plays her cards much better!

[Enter Stubborn from garden. Polignac leans affectionately on his arm; they catch sight of Catherine and become excited.]

Stubborn—[Aside] Here's a pretty mess.

Polignac—[Aside] That vixen must not cross my path. [To Stubborn] John, shall we retire to the conservatory?

Stubborn—By all means, it's too warm here. [Exeunt.]

Catherine—[Enraged, tries to follow them.] Mr. Stubborn, Mr. Stubborn, husband! Madame, where are you going with my husband?

Marquis—[Catches her by the arm.] Woman, will you believe me now? Listen to reason; revenge yourself by denouncing the son. Remember, twenty thousand francs, twenty thousand francs.

Catherine—Unhand me, let me go, I must after them, help, let me go, let me go.

[Enter Cretin and Marlin excited.]

Cretin—What's this? The Marquis de Montmorency would presume to trifle. I shall insist upon an explanation, sir. This shall go into the courts. A scandal, if you wish. My poor innocent dove. He shall answer for this insult. [Leads Catherine away in hysterics.]

Marlin—Why, bless my soul, that was a most compromising affair, Marquis. I did not expect to see that of you. It casts reflection on your gray hairs, on your dignity as a father. [Leads him out.]

Marquis—Balked, baffled, when she could have aided me so opportunely. But one hope is left.

Marlin—By my soul, Marquis, you are stark mad. This is serious, very serious. [Exeunt.]

[Enter Charles and Claire.]

Charles—Shall we sit, Mlle?

Claire—If you wish. [Seats herself and picks a flower to pieces.]

Charles—A beautiful rose.

Claire—You think so.

Charles—Claire, why do you hold me at so cruel a distance. When we met beside the brook you were friendly and you conversed freely. You jested, but to-day——

Claire—[Coldly.] To-day?

Charles—To-day you either speak in monosyllables or you do not speak at all. Have I said anything to displease you?

Claire—I have not accused you.

Charles—Not in so many words, but you have by cold looks and icy smiles.

Claire—It has not been my wish to pain you.

Charles—How formally you say that, yet when we spoke together last you defended me against your aunt, and you gave me the right to address you wherever we met. Apparently you have changed your mind. Perhaps you now agree with your aunt. You despise the love of a man who is not of noble family.

Claire—The love, do I understand you aright?

Charles—I do love you. When I hinted it before you were not angry but now when I am permitted to say it openly, you freeze me with disdain.

Claire—You permit yourself to say that you love me, pray who has given you that permission?

Charles—Your father and my own.

Claire—Do tell me all about it, you have at last found a subject which interests me.

Charles—It is all told in these words, I love you.

Claire—You love me. You went to your father and besought him. You won him over. Then he went to my father and pleaded with him and won him over, was that it?

Charles—Why, I don't know what took place between them.

Claire—[With scorn.] Then I can enlighten you, Mr. Stubborn. My father is more communicative with me than yours with you for he knows that it is not necessary; you are such a model son, so docile and so submissive. You are the clerk and cry amen to whatever your father says. Yes, Mr. Stubborn, I know all.

Charles—I do not understand.

Claire—Perhaps you will not, you affect ignorance.

Charles—Would I be guilty of want of frankness to you, the woman I love?

Claire—You flatter me beyond my deserts. I must thank you for the honor, though I am surprised you should think it necessary when we are in your power.

Charles—You are absolutely mysterious.

Claire—Am I, I understand you well enough, sir. Your father has taught you, being his apt pupil from infancy, to believe in money, and to sacrifice such matters as honor and affection to worldly advantages. He is ambitious for you and tells you that it would be a good speculation to marry some girl with no fortune but an historic name, and Claire de Montmorency must serve your purpose. She thanks you [makes a sweeping curtesy] and in addition you cozen

her by a pretense of a romantic attachment. How you and your father would have laughed at each other if she had believed it.

Charles—You are more than wronging me, you are wronging yourself. Any woman might be proud of the love I bear you.

Claire—You play your part well.

Charles—[Firmly.] If I know my heart I have not deserved insult at your hands. [He bows and rises to leave.]

Claire—[Barring his way.] Stay, sir, where are you going?

Charles—The obedient and submissive son declines any longer to urge a suit which is received in so extraordinary a manner.

Claire—[Stands between him and the door.] Are you an honest man?

Charles—Before God, I am.

Claire—Then I may believe that you have not considered the false position in which we stand. How can I trust you that you love me, when you suffer me to be made the victim of a nefarious plot?

Charles—Plot!

Claire—You signed the agreement.

Charles—I signed no agreement.

Claire—I saw your signature.

Charles—Oh, I remember now. I signed my name as witness, and as witness simply after the signatures of our respective fathers. I know no more than the dead what the paper contained.

Claire—Can I believe you?

Charles—You are torturing me, there is something serious in all this, tell me, for I love you.

Claire—I cannot muster the courage, it is so revolting to my womanhood, to my sense of self respect, that I—I may weep, and I would not shed a tear before the man who has wronged me in his thoughts.

Charles—You tears will be sacred, for I love you. Trample on my feelings, tear my heart to pieces, from this hour I consecrate myself to you.

Claire—I must justify myself. John Stubborn holds the mortgages on Montmorency, and like a highwayman compels my father to surrender his daughter. [Weeps.]

Charles—My God. The scales have fallen from my eyes.

Claire—[Recovering herself.] And that agreement which you witnessed bound us to forfeit Montmorency. On the other hand, if I married you, the mortgages were to be annulled. I am valued at five hundred thousand francs. Your father is a good accountant. So much for my smiles, so much for my hair, so much for my eyes—the heart, that insignificant thing, was not mentioned. Presumably I was to throw it in as a makeweight. I am a Montmorency, night and morning my aunt repeats the glory of our race to me. But were I a ditcher's daughter, I would not consent to be sold as merchandise. That million which your father throws at my head with such insolence of generosity makes me shudder. I am not only to be sold, but I am to take part in the transaction and cover myself with infamy.

Charles—Oh spare my father!

Claire—No one dare claim that it is a son's duty to take part in such a plot against an unoffending girl.

Charles—On my soul I knew nothing of this.

Claire—Montomrency is dear to me. The broken statues which you saw in the garden, have a priceless value to me. This has been my home. Here I have been happy. Everything around me is a link in a mighty chain of associations and every object recalls the

time when we were princes in the land. That day has gone by. Now is the sway of the mortgagemen and they are to sit in our ancient seats. Take Montmorency, but Claire de Montmorency will neither sell herself nor permit others to sell her.

Charles—My brain is turning, Claire forgive me, surely if I refuse to wed you there will be no forfeit.

Claire—You do this!

Charles—I will bear the burden of the refusal; such an act will be a renunciation of my father's love. He will spurn me. It was a plot against an innocent girl; I will annul the agreement, will you believe me when I say that I do this because I love you?

Claire—If you do this——

[Enter John Stubborn and the Marquis.]

Stubborn—Well, Marquis, my son looks like a thriving lover.

Marquis—They seem to be very well satisfied with each other, certainly. [Aside.] Triumph, Claire has carried the day.

Stubborn—Ah, Mlle you are a pearl of beauty and I propose that the pearl shall have the most beautiful setting. I'll make Montmorency worthy of you.

Claire—My constant prayer is that I may be worthy of Montmorency.

Marquis—That is a sentiment Claire which would please your aunt exceedingly.

Claire—We each endeavor, papa, to be worthy of our name.

Stubborn—She is a most charming lady, and don't you think Marquis, it would be proper to announce to her that the young people are agreed. Charles, you lucky dog, you're pale with happiness.

Charles—I never knew happiness, sir, until this hour.

Marquis—[Rings bell at side of the door, servant enters.] Give my compliments to Madame de Polignac and ask her to join us at once. [Exit servant.]

Stubborn—Well, Charles, we'll make quite a place of Montmorency now that it is our own. [To Marquis.] And to think I was a gardener boy here, and was kicked off the premises.

[Enter Polignac and Marlin.]

Stubborn—Madame, we've been waiting to tell you the good news, the parties are agreed.

Polignac—[Severely.] I do not understand your allusion, sir.

Stubborn—Why, your neice Claire, and my son Charles.

Charles—[Steps forward and looks his father in the eye, but speaks to Polignac.] My father is somewhat precipitate, Madame, there is as yet no marriage agreement.

Stubborn—[Mocks him.] My son is somewhat behindhand, Madame. Your brother and I concluded the marriage contract some time ago. There it is, Mr. Lawyer, all right and straight, isn't it?

Charles—[Takes contract out of his father's hand, puts it into his pocket and assumes an air of dignity.] Marquis de Montmorency, I at least will be no party to this plot against your family. This settlement is waste paper, for I refuse to marry Mlle de Montmorency.

Stubborn—Charles, I thought you a gentleman. This is not gentlemanly jesting.

Charles—You have heard me, I will not marry this lady.

Stubborn—Am I in my senses? Do you play me false?

Charles—I revoke all former promises, I will not marry Claire de Montmorency.

Stubborn—Are you mad! What has changed you?

Charles—The knowledge that you schemed to force this innocent

girl to an unwilling consent, by exercising over her father the power of a creditor over a debtor. I will not marry this lady, the refusal comes from me.

Polignac—[In tears.] Noble young man.

Marquis—[To his daughter.] Most cleverly done—when there is cunningness to be employed, commend me to a woman.

Stubborn—[Glares at his son and sinks into a chair.] Defeated! Humiliated by my own son! [Tears at his cravat.] Air, I am stifling; air. [Marlin goes to his aid.] Charles, Charles——come——here—— [As Charles approaches he springs up and makes an effort to strike him but writhes and falls into a fit.]

[Curtain falls.]

ACT IV.

Scene—[Drawing room in the house of the Marquis de Montmorency at Paris. Time night. The Countess de Polignac and Claire in eager conversation.]

Claire—When did it happen, Aunt?

Polignac—A few moments ago. Michael the porter became indisposed and I saw my opportunity. I put in his place faithful Bertrand, and said to him, if Mr. Charles Stubborn presents himself admit him at once. So, my love prepare your heart, for great things may happen.

Claire—Oh, thank you dearest aunty; what I have suffered since we came to Paris! To know that Charles came here day after day and was repulsed by papa.

[Enter the Marquis.]

Polignac—Hush, not a word.

Marquis—Mathilde, have you heard the news?

Polignac—News, brother?

Marquis—That is strange, I should imagine you would be the first to learn of it, especially when it concerns you.

Polignac—Concerns me, Henri.

Marquis—I almost hear you give a sigh of relief, and it isn't everybody whose rival has the kindness to leave a clear field.

Claire—You are forever talking in riddles, papa.

Marquis—Not at all Claire. Your aunt will easily comprehend when I tell her that Catherine, that young woman of Maison Blanche, you know, who aspired to become its mistress, has disappeared—eloped, vanished.

Polignac—Eloped, brother! Surely not with any of our friends.

Marquis—I know what is on your lips, Mathilde, and I will relieve your anxiety. The young woman who caused you many a sleepless night, will bring you no further trouble. News comes from Montmorency that she has become the wife of one of the village lawyers.

Polignac—Ah. [She heaves a sigh.]

Marquis—There, I told you the intelligence would relieve your mind. I presume it would be in order to extend congratulations.

Polignac—[Confused.] Brother!

Marquis—I have as good cause to be grateful as you, Mathilde. The virago came very near getting me into a mess of trouble when you were making a fool of yourself with old Stubborn.

Polignac—Henri, such language is not at all in place. That event is painful to us all.

Marquis—As you like, sister mine. At any rate we should be supremely satisfied to be out of the clutches of grasping mortgage men and once more can be independent. Claire, my dear, don't mope. It will ruin your beauty. I have noticed of late a listless expression to your face.

Claire—You are very observant, papa.

Polignac—Have no fear for Claire, *you* have taken care that your daughter's beauty shall not be dimmed.

Marquis—What do you wish to insinuate?

Polignac—My meaning is perfectly clear.

Marquis—Because I jest with Claire about her ancient admirer, old Stubborn, who comes here every night to offer her a bouquet, and to kiss her hand and to call her angel, am I to be reproached?

Polignac—You know I do not refer to Mr. Stubborn, whose gratitude to Claire for nursing him through his long illness shows a thoroughly good heart.

Marquis—I have always allowed myself to be ruled by women.

Polignac—So the world believes.

Marquis—But if I could have mustered up the courage, I would have prevented that absurd charity. Why, it gave the old fool almost a right to enter into our intimacy and become a friend of the family.

Claire—[In a low voice.] It was not charity, papa, my act was caused from a sense of justice.

Marquis—Then I suppose we are to go on to the end of the chapter, and my house is to be invaded daily by old Stubborn until he dies. Peste, Claire, you have a wonderful fascination over old men. Your Uncle Beauchamp adored you, but then I do not quarrel with him for he had the consideration to die early and leave you all his fortune.

Claire—Oh, papa, how can you have the heart to speak flippantly of a man who was sincerely your friend.

Marquis—These sincere friends claim the privilege of regarding one in the worst light, and of abusing one with the utmost frankness. Now acknowledge, Claire, didn't he tell you all my little faults without reservation?

Claire—He often told me that you were a wicked, wicked man and that you were a spendthrift and had every vice.

Marquis—Charming old man, did he say all that? I suppose you believed every word he said.

Polignac—[With energy.] He told Claire that you spent her dowry behind the scenes of the grand opera, and when by his will he made up for your crime, for crime it was, you ought to be the last one to sneer at him.

Marquis—What savage energy! Do you know Mathilde you were more amusing when your ears were stuffed with cotton. I shall regret the good old times when you had neuralgia. Since then you have regained your youth in a wonderful degree.

Polignac—I presume you were often witty at my expense, especially among the fairies of the opera.

Marquis—Peste, there is more in this than I thought. Is it possible you really like old Stubborn, and whilst I supposed he was coming here to play the moon calf before Claire, a little matrimonial episode has been going on quietly between you. I must ask your pardon for having spoken slightingly of a gentleman upon whom you propose to confer your hand. Shall I offer my best wishes now? Pray when will the event take place which will change the Countess de Polignac into plain Mrs. John Stubborn.

Polignac—Brother!

[Enter servant announcing Mr. John Stubborn.]

[John Stubborn enters, is very subdued in manner and shows traces of illness. He gives a quiet nod to Marquis, bows gravely to Polignac and presents a gorgeous bouquet to Claire whose hand he raises to his lips.]

Marquis—[Aside] Talk of the devil and you see his horns. [To Polignac.] My dear sister that fit was a fortunate thing if you intend to marry him, for it made him managable, whereas before,—whew—

Polignac—You were better when you were struggling with pecuniary embarrassment, but since your circumstances have improved you delight to show the worst part of your nature. [To Stubborn.] Mr. Stubborn the air of Paris is agreeing with you, you are growing stronger daily.

Stubborn—I think I am mending, but somehow I do not accustom myself to the new life which my health obliges me to lead.

Polignac—You want an object on which to center your thoughts.

Stubborn—That is it my dear Madame. I dare not return to business. The doctors say that pressure on the brain would bring on another shock which would prove fatal. I am like a tree uprooted and transplanted, and I must make new roots, but the trouble is I don't know how. [Looks at her with intentness.]

Polignac.—[Tenderly.] Believe me, my dear Mr. Stubborn, such an opportunity is sure to present itself. Adversity has this charm, it not only brings people closer together, but it reveals them in their true light. None of us are what we seem, for the world makes us wear masks.

Claire—We do know you Mr. Stubborn so much better than we did, and perhaps we know you better than you know yourself.

Stubborn—What is that my dear young lady?

Marquis—Don't puzzle your brains to comprehend. Women now-a-days have the fashion of talking epigram without meaning.

Stubborn—[Looking feebly from one to the other.] I don't understand this at all. [To Polignac.] I can at least rely on you.

Polignac—Claire lacks the courage to explain, and my brother lacks the good will, so I will say what is in our hearts.

Marquis—Sister, Mr. Stubborn will not thank you for what I see you are determined to tell him.

Polignac—I beg of you Henri, not to interfere. Mr. Stubborn will rebuke me himself, if from a most sincere desire I venture to recall to him things which he has freed from his mind.

Marquis—As the head of the family I totally disapprove all this

Polignac—You have been an exemplary head of the family indeed. The disapprobation of such a knight of the grand opera will weigh very heavily.

Marquis—[Sighs.] If heaven were just you would have your neuralgia again.

Stubborn—Madame, it is not likely I shall rebuke you, for I feel in my own heart that you are interested in my own welfare. But do not keep me in suspense. Has anything happened to— to— anybody?

Polignac—We are most desirous that you should forgive your son.

Stubborn—[Breathes hard, shakes his head and becomes rigid.] Do not ask that, not that.

Marquis—[Appears angry, takes a cigarette, strikes a match and begins to smoke.] Another scene, damn me. [Aside.]

Polignac—Smoking in the drawing room, Henri!

Marquis—Really my nerves are unequal to the strain, if this is to be another tearful chapter.

Polignac—What manners, what manners. Whither are we drifting?

Marquis—You may well ask that question when you are determined not only upon a misalliance for yourself but are eager to bring about a misalliance for my daughter.

Polignac—Misalliance, indeed! I am opposed to a misalliance just as much as you. If my niece should marry a rich man's son whom she did not love because he was rich, and if he should seek to marry her because she was a Montmorency that would be a misalliance. When the matter was of that complexion I was opposed to it. But now I know better, we all know better. We know that Charles [all look at John Stubborn who shivers from head to foot and becomes rigid] is a most noble young man who loves Claire with an absorbing passion. Claire would not be a woman if she were not impressed with his devotion. We have hearts, we are not all of stone.

Marquis—I have never fought against a woman's will for that is useless, but I wish that all your match-making might be postponed indefinitely.

Polignac—Is it our fault that the grand opera is closed?

Marquis—Well if there are to be many more such tender scenes and thrilling emotional passages, I certainly must fly for refuge somewhere. Stubborn come out of the land of dreams and smoke a cigarette. The ladies will forgive you, for they are entirely with you and opposed to me. I believe, to retain my daughter's affection, I must have a stroke of paralysis. Claire, couldn't you love me as you used to upon less terrible terms?

Claire—Oh, papa, you do not know how you wound me by turning everything to jest. You know I love you, and in your heart of hearts you love me better than anything in the world. And secretly you commend me for what I do, and yet you persist—

Marquis—Pray continue darling, I am all ears.

Claire—Some day, papa, you know you must grow old. You may put it off as long as you can, but the day must come when you will acknowledge that nothing remains in this world for you, save the sacred devotion of your daughter.

Marquis—And then I suppose we must call in that stupid Abbe at whom you and I have laughed so much, and I must make the toilette of my soul for the great event. A little fragment of my youth is still unconsumed, let me devour that and then I will be completely at your disposition, daughter and priest.

[Enter servant announcing Mr. Charles Stubborn.]

Marquis—[Excitedly.] Not at home, not at home. Send Michael the porter to me immediately.

Claire—Stay where you are. I have sent for him and I will go myself and introduce him.

Servant—I beg pardon sir, but Michael had a fever and was taken to the hospital.

Marquis—Who took his place at the door?

Servant—One of Madame's servants, sir. [Exit.]

Marquis—That was treachery, Mathilde!

Polignac—And were you not treacherous Henri, when you instructed Michael to turn that poor young man from the door? Were you the student you profess to be of a woman's heart, you should have known that you were taking the very worst way to change Claire's disposition toward him. You must make up your mind to accept the inevitable graciously.

Marquis—Yes it must be so. My sister marries the gardener whom my father kicked into the gutter, and my daughter marries his son. How wise I've been to distribute my affection among the fairies of the opera. What is there for an honest man to live for but pleasure in these degenerated days!

[Enter Claire and Charles, she leans upon his arm and he is flushed and triumphant. Stubborn turns his chair and is absorbed with newspaper.]

Claire—I feared your complicity in that infamous plot—but now—

Charles—[Ardently.] Now——

Claire—I know you were no party to it.

Charles—Had I not seen you and loved you——

Claire—[Turning her head away.] Am I to believe this?

Charles—You must trust me. My father and I were on the eve of separation, for the dream of Nice was graven in my heart. I asked for time and he gave me two hours. I spent them in your company.

Claire—With me!

Charles—Can you censure me when I found the unknown of Nice, the object of my fondest hope to be yourself?

Claire—I had not forgotten the stranger of Nice.

Charles—Claire, I knew nothing of this terrible undercurrent of plotting, only that my father proposed a marriage of convenience with a woman whom I worshiped.

Claire—I will be frank and true and womanly. You have conducted yourself as I would have the man who should——

Charles—Claire! [Seizes her hands, she turns away her head.]

Claire—[Meeting his ardent gaze.] Who should hope to win me for his wife.

Charles—Oh, happiness.

Claire—Charles you have impressed yourself upon my heart as manly and capable of self-sacrifice.

Charles—But now I am a pauper, a struggling lawyer eking out a miserable subsistence.

Claire—Come to my father's house.

Charles—He has shut the door in my face.

Claire—I have opened it.

Polignac—[Comes forward, offers her hand to Charles. Claire goes to her father to whom she talks in dumb show.] I am sincerely rejoiced to meet you again Mr. Stubborn. If you come to visit me the doors will always be open to you.

Charles—I thank you Madame from the bottom of my heart. If you are friendly to me my day of supreme happiness cannot long be deferred. Have you heard any news of my father? [Polignac gives an expressive glance toward Stubborn who remains oblivious to everything around him. Charles betrays emotion and moves a step towards him.]

Polignac—Let me present you to my brother. [Charles advances and offers his hand which the Marquis disregards.]

Marquis—[Lights a cigarette.] We may as well be plain with each other, young man, your visits to this house will only be tolerated if they are intended for Countess de Polignac. They are paid neither to me nor to my daughter.

Charles—As you will Marquis. I am not a stickler for forms, the great essential is to be inside these walls.

Marquis—You will understand sir, that your visits to my sister must not be made a cloak for carrying on any love suit to my daughter. Once for all, that is out of the question.

Charles—At our last meeting I somehow received the impression that you were favorable to my pretensions. [Claire remonstrates with her father.] I believe I am not misled by any personal vanity in saying that Claire is not averse to my urging my suit.

Marquis—But I am. You refused my daughter's hand in the most open fashion. That should have ended the whole affair. [Hums.] He who will not when he may, when he will shall then have nay.

Polignac—For shame, Henri. Tartuffe is a new role and suits you by no means as well as Don Giovanni.

Marquis—Sister, you abuse the influence you possess in this house when you address such language to me.

Polignac—But brother why will you not perceive that your position is untenable. Do you mean to tell us that if the young people agree, you will refuse your paternal consent?.

Marquis—Of what use would my consent be when his father will not give his?

Polignac—How do you know that? Claire, be it your task to persuade your father. And you, Charles, soften your father. Tell him I am not indifferent to him, and that I warmly favor this marriage.

Charles—[Stands dejectedly in front of his father who apparently pays no attention to him.] Father, I have sinned against you, but it was not I, it was the unfortunate circumstance that compelled me to choose between obedience to the woman I love, and obedience to you. Will you forgive me. If you have been unhappy, have not I. And it was not the least of my misery that I was compelled to leave you sorely stricken and by my art. You were at death's door and I was not near you. But father, Claire was there, and she was a thousand times a better nurse than I could have been. For her sake, forgive me. Let the ties of love speak again in your heart. Do not steel yourself against me. Why abstain from the realization of all that you desired, because I was the instrument of the rebuke that smote us both. Were we not wrong. Could such an angel as Claire be made an article of barter. Oh, father, you know that you love her as a daughter. She is dearer to you than I. She is more loveable, she is purer, better, nobler than I. Can you not forgive me for doing as she wished. Father, the world will remain out of joint until the higher nature of woman is conceded. In Claire there is something of the divine. Could I ever be wrong in obeying her. Is it possible that loving Claire you can still cast me from you for having obeyed her. Can anything efface the memory of our misery as a reconciliation. Love is like sunlight. Will you shut out the sunlight from the evening of your days. Father, [places his hand on the old man's shoulder] I have sinned against you, but not against heaven. Forgive me, I pray for your forgivness. [Kneels.] Still obdurate [sighs] I can plead no more. [Stands in an attitude of deep dejection.]

Marquis—You see Claire, my consent will be of no earthly service.

Claire—Nevertheless give it, papa. Do you think that after this episode I will ever listen to the addresses of any other man? Who could ever be to me what Charles Stubborn is? He has shown his devotion. He has proved his love, and I can rely on both. The fixed nature of his father is elevated in him into a noble fidelity, the one thing constantly lacking in men. They are faithful to an idea, but they cannot be faithful to a woman. Charles has shown that he is faithful to both. Would you wish me to dismiss his image from my heart? This is the reverse of all that you ever taught me, and how could I do this and retain the purity of my soul and the dignity of my womanhood. Can I forget Charles Stubborn? We have endured too much together, and suffered too much. The threads of our lives have been woven too closely. If you refuse, I remain unmarried. That is my fixed determination.

Marquis—[Reluctantly.] Well, Claire, if you put it in that light I must—consent.

Claire—[Joyfully.]Charles,Charles,my father receives you as his son

Charles—I owe this happiness to the angelic pleading of your daughter. There has not been any legal barrier to my union with Claire, for I have in my possession the original contract.

Marquis—You don't tell me so. I wondered what had become of that document, and I hunted high and low to destroy it. If that's the situation you need not win your father.

Charles—[Dejected.] Claire will tell you herself that she would not be satisfied with such a consent. It must be in spirit as well as in form. I no more propose to profit by that document in the case of my father, than in your own.

Claire—Let me try if I can move your father. [She goes to Stubborn seats herself at his feet, leans against his knee and taking one of his hands presses it between her own, speaks in a low voice.] Father, father, it is I, your Claire, who pleads. [All gather around, but at some distance. She continues to plead in dumb show and suddenly taking her handkerchief begins to wipe the tears from the old man's eyes, and crys out.] Charles, come, your father weeps, kneel beside him, and implore his pardon.

Stubborn—[Charles kneels, and the old man falls upon his neck and sobs out.] My son, my son.

[Curtain drops.]

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